THE NEW INDIAN EXPRESS

BENGALURU • FRIDAY • SEPTEMBER 25, 2020 • ₹7.00 • PAGES 32 • LATE CITY EDITION

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**HARLEY-DAVIDSON TO EXIT INDIA BIZ**

- The iconic American bike maker plans to close its plant in Bawal, Haryana and lay off around 70 employees in India
- The move is part of the firm's overhaul strategy called Rewire, which advocates exiting markets where volumes are low and profitability is elusive P13

# Trust deficit shows in India-China LAC talks

Neighbour wants focus on Pangong south bank alone; Delhi is pushing for negotiations on entire Ladakh

MAYANK SINGH @ New Delhi

MILITARY-LEVEL talks on resolving the stand-off along the Line of Actual Control in Ladakh will not be guided by the Chinese agenda, as they cannot be fully trusted, a senior officer said on Thursday.

While the Chinese side wants to discuss only the situation on the south bank of the Pangong Tso lake for now, India is emphatic that the bilateral talks need to include every stand-off location so as to arrive at a comprehensive solution.

"China wants that the talks be only on south bank of the Pangong Tso. We want that the talks should be on the entire eastern Ladakh and begin from Depsang. The south bank ought to be the last point of discussion," the officer said.

"The Depsang problem, where Chinese have blocked four patrolling points, is much older than the problem they initiated in May last in the Pangong area. Now that we are talking, we need to include every place," the officer added.

The Chinese are harping on the south bank because the Indian Army has occupied all the important heights there, including Mukhpari, Rezang La and Reqin La, the officer said and added that the talks need to include de-escalation of air activity too.

"However, the situation doesn't seem like it will be resolved soon and we cannot trust them. China also has done all the preparations to stay at the LAC through the entire winter season. We cannot trust China blindly," the officer said.

Referring to the recent joint statement issued by both sides after the Corps Commander-level meeting, he said: "Issuing a joint statement is good. We want solutions but China should manifest whatever it says on the ground. Till the time Chinese troops don't go back, we will not slacken our positions. Our soldiers are alert and fully prepared," the officer emphasised.

Most of the Indian soldiers on the LAC have been armed with the modern Seg Sauer assault rifles. The soldiers used to have INSAS rifles till now.

Clarifying why representatives from the foreign office attended the recent Corps Commanders meeting, the officer said it was to send a clear message that there is no difference in India's stance at the military and diplomatic levels. P9

**Ground communication to be strengthened**

India and China have decided to strengthen ground communication and stop sending more troops along the LAC to avoid misunderstandings and misjudgments, the MEA said

**14 train pairs suspended**

With the three-day Rail Roko protest in Punjab by farmer outfits starting on Thursday, 14 pairs of trains have been suspended. A state bandh call for Friday has already been given

# Show of strength today to mark bandh

EXPRESS NEWS SERVICE @ New Delhi

TAKING their fight to the streets after the showdown in Parliament, Opposition parties will on Friday support a call for Bharat Bandh given by over two-dozen affiliated farmer organisations over the recent passage of three farm sector reform bills by voice vote.

While Punjab has already seen disruptions in train services due to massive protests, a clutch of organisations like the All India Farmers Union, Bharatiya Kisan Union, All India Kisan Mahasangh, and All India Kisan Sangharsh Coordination Committee have announced a nationwide bandh on Friday. Farmers' outfits in Karnataka, Tamil Nadu and Maharashtra, too, are on the same page. Also, 10 Central trade unions will support Bharat Bandh.

The Congress on Thursday launched a nearly two-month-long mass movement against the government for passing the farm bills. It intends to collect two crore signatures from protesting farmers against the proposed laws that are awaiting Presidential assent. "The nationwide agitation will continue till the government repeals the black laws," A K Antony had said after a meeting of the party general secretaries on Monday. Apart from joining the Bharat Bandh, the Congress has lined up a series of pro-farmer programmes, said K C Venugopal, party general secretary.

In Bihar, RJD, Congress and Left parties will together take to the streets and stage protests. In West Bengal, Chief Minister Mamata Banerjee said they will protest against the farm bills until they are withdrawn.

Apart from Congress, Trinamool, AAP, TRS, BJD and Left parties have demanded that the bills be sent to a select committee for vetting. P9

FARMERS TO BLOCK HIGHWAYS: P5

# Centre allows states to spend 50 pc of SDRF in Covid fight

EXPRESS NEWS SERVICE @ New Delhi

THE Centre has allowed states to spend up to 50 per cent of funds from the State Disaster Response Fund (SDRF) to ramp up health infrastructure such as quarantine facilities, testing laboratories, oxygen generation plants, purchase of ventilators and PPE kits to fight the COVID-19 pandemic.

The Union Ministry of Home Affairs (MHA) wrote to the states on Thursday, a day after Prime Minister Narendra Modi told chief ministers of the seven worst-affected states that his government has increased the states' limit to spend the SDRF to boost infrastructure in the fight against the pandemic.

In a letter to chief secretaries of all states and Union Territories, the Union Home Ministry said that it has partially modified the list of items and norms of assistance for containment measures of Covid-19, eligible from SDRF by way of special one-time dispensation with the overall capping of 50 per cent for the financial year 2020-21.

The areas where the states can spend up to 50 per cent of the SDRF include quarantine, sample collection and screening facilities.

Provision for temporary accommodation, food, clothing, medical care, etc., for people affected and sheltered in quarantine camps (other than home quarantine) or for cluster containment operations will be covered under the modified norms.

CONTINUED ON: P10

# Congress MLA Narayan Rao dies of Covid-19

EXPRESS NEWS SERVICE @Bengaluru

CONGRESS MLA B Narayan Rao (65), who was undergoing treatment for Covid-19 at a private hospital here, died on Thursday. He represented the Basavakalyan assembly seat.

Rao was critically ill with multi-organ failure, after he was diagnosed with severe Covid-19 infection, and passed away at 3.55 pm, Manipal Hospital Director Dr Manish Rai said.

His death comes a day after Minister of State for Railways, Suresh Angadi, succumbed to the coronavirus. P4

NEW WHEELS

# Deve Gowda gets luxe car worth ₹60 lakh

ASHWINI M SRIPAD @Bengaluru

FORMER Prime Minister and Rajya Sabha member H D Deve Gowda now has a swanky new ride. The high-end Volvo car, given to him last week, is the most expensive vehicle given to any elected representative in the state by the State Government. It costs almost three times more than what is permitted for a Rajya Sabha member.

The decision to purchase such an expensive car at a time when the state is facing severe financial crisis has raised many eyebrows.

CONTINUED ON: P4

EXPRESS READ

**SPB continues to be critical, says hospital**

Chennai: Singer S P Balasubrahmanyam, who is fighting Covid and is on life support, is extremely critical, a hospital said on Thursday. A team of experts at the MGM Healthcare hospital is monitoring his health. P7

IPL TODAY DELHI vs CHENNAI

LIVE: Star Sports1/Hotstar @ 7.30pm

THURSDAY'S RESULT

Kings XI Punjab beat Royal Challengers Bangalore by 97 runs

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**Hon'ble Minister for Municipal Administration & Urban Development, Industries, IT & C, to inaugurate the Durgam Cheruvu Bridge today!**

The Hon'ble Minister for Municipal Administration & Urban Development, Industries, IT & C, Telangana, Sri K T Rama Rao, will inaugurate the state-of-the-art Extradosed Cable-stayed bridge across the Durgam Cheruvu lake today.

Built by the USD 21 billion technology, engineering & construction conglomerate, Larsen & Toubro, the 735.6 m long bridge is an integral part of the Strategic Road Development Program of the Telangana Government undertaken under the Ministry of Municipal Administration & Urban Development.

One of the outstanding features of the Durgam Cheruvu bridge is that it boasts of the world's longest precast segmental span of 233.85 m in concrete for an Extradosed Cable-stayed bridge.

The citizens of Hyderabad will have reason to smile as the 6-lane bridge will reduce travel time from HITEC City to Jubilee Hills by at least half an hour.

Conquering various challenges, including difficult conditions and terrain, the Durgam Cheruvu bridge is another infrastructural marvel from L&T that makes India and the people of Telangana proud - a testament to our reputation as 'Builders of the India of the 21st century'.

**What sets the Durgam Cheruvu bridge apart...**

- World's longest precast segmental span of 233.85 m in concrete for an Extradosed Cable-stayed bridge
- Supported by 2 pylons, 52 stay cables and 53 precast segments
- Precast transport synchronized with loadout jetty to minimize possibility of traffic congestion
- 25.86 m wide spans enabling 3 lanes of free-flowing traffic each way

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